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BOOKS ON RELIGIOUS PEDAGOGY

The Great Teachers of Judaism and Christianity. By CHARLES FOSTER KENT. New York: EATON AND MAINS; Cincinnati: JENNINGS AND GRAHAM, 1911 (*Modern Sunday School Manuals*. Edited by CHARLES FOSTER KENT in collaboration with JOHN T. McFARLAND). pp. 166.

WHILE education as a science is of comparatively recent growth, the laws governing the human soul as well as the methods by which the soul may be guided and directed were recognized and appreciated in most ancient times. Keeping this in mind, our author endeavors in this volume to present the great personalities of the Bible in their capacity as teachers and to investigate the methods which they employed with a view of utilizing these in a practical way in our present system of religious education. Possessed of a reverent appreciation of the Bible and of a keen pedagogic instinct, Professor Kent is eminently fit to deal with this subject, and the result is a most readable and useful manual for teachers.

In dealing with the heroes of Judaism, to which the greater part of the work is devoted, the author recognizes among them three distinct classes of teachers—the Prophets, the Priests, and the Wise Men (comp. Jer. 18, 18), the last including also the sages and the rabbis of post-biblical times. In each case the history and aims of the class under discussion are first given and then the teaching methods employed by the members of the class are discussed. Since this is to be a popular book, little attention is paid to the various opinions regarding the history and functions of the respective characters. It is evident, however, that the author has decided views on all the mooted questions and, like a good teacher, presents them to the reader

in a positive form. In fact, the teaching ability of our author can be seen in every page—in the systematic arrangement of material, in the lucid presentation of subject matter, and in the exactness with which scientific truths are presented.

Prof. Kent sees the secret of Israel's power in the emphasis that Judaism always placed on teaching. The Bible is characterized throughout by a practical, didactic purpose, as is evident from the very name applied to it in later Judaism. Torah primarily means guidance, instruction. The term is applied in the Bible to the teachings of the prophets, to the directions given by the priests to the people, and to the counsel given by the wise men to their disciples.

Although the function of the prophets was primarily to preach to the people at large and warn them against evils, they were also teachers in the most literal sense of the term. It was especially due to their immediate disciples that their teachings were preserved and their words became effective (comp. Isa. 8, 16, 17a). But even in their public discourses, the prophets employed many of the principles which are regarded to-day of great importance in pedagogy.

That one of the functions of the priests was to teach the law to the people is clear from numerous references in the Bible (Deut. 33, 10; Mic. 8, 11; Jer. 5, 31; Mal. 2, 6, 7). Besides the duty of guarding the oracle, it was also the priest's duty to teach the people how to worship and how to live. As servants of the Temple and as judges, the priests came in close contact with the people and were able to exert a potent influence over them. The author's theory (pp. 54-56) that the different decalogues found in the Bible were the teaching lessons given by the priests to the people is an improved modification of an older theory that these decalogues formed texts for children's instruction.

The existence of a class of men, possessed of practical wisdom and discernment, to whom people turned for advice and instruction, can hardly be doubted. We find reference to such a class of men not only in the Bible, but also in Babylonian and Egyptian history, and even at the present time such persons are

met with in the villages of Arabia. The wise men of Israel, although they dispensed instruction in olden times and some of their parables and sayings are preserved in the Bible, came into prominence only after the Babylonian exile. A most vivid picture of the wise men of later days is preserved by Ben Sira (39, 1-11). The book of Proverbs is a collection of the sayings of these men. They taught small groups of disciples who gathered about them and whom they called sons. They employed in their teachings all the figures of speech which help to carry the lesson home and impress it upon the hearts and minds of the pupils. The universal character of their sayings and epigrams helped to make them the teachers of all future generations. The transformation of these wise men into scribes and later into rabbis was gradual and a natural process. Although busily engaged in the new duties of transcribing and interpreting the sacred texts, the scribes and the rabbis did not forsake the traditions of their class and continued to impart direct instruction to the numerous disciples that came to them. The early rabbinic writings furnish us with numerous examples of the superior methods of instruction employed by these men.

Our author's treatment of the rabbis and their methods is on the whole fair and sympathetic, although, as might be expected, the author found it necessary to discover the faults of their system in order to show the necessity for the new force that then arose—Christianity. The rabbis placed too much stress on detail, they exalted ritual above character, they made religion not the relation between man and God, but the conformity to certain laws and ceremonies, they did not distinguish between the vital and the trivial. Even granting that all these charges are actually true, which is not the case, as the author himself points out, we venture to suggest that a non-Christian might find in these very charges indications of superior pedagogic principles, which recognize the importance of the concrete, the particular, and the tangible in teaching.

Jesus is designated as a rabbi and in his teachings he employed many of the methods that were in vogue in the rabbinic schools. He refused to write down his teachings, feeling that the most

effective teaching is that given by word of mouth. He employed the object lesson and his statements are always put in the positive and direct form. Teaching was also an important feature in the work of the early apostles. Many of them were the disciples of the rabbis, from whom they learned methods of teaching. They had a function similar to that of the rabbis. It was now their duty to interpret the Scriptures in the light of the new revelation and to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah and in order to bring home to the people these new interpretations, they employed various pedagogic methods.

The last chapter of the book is a lucid and comprehensive survey of the problem of religious education in the present. A special appeal is made to the church to realize more fully its duty and to develop the educational institutions connected with it. In an appendix, helpful questions for study are given, in a systematic order.

Heroes of Israel. A Teacher's Manual to be used in connection with the Student's Textbook. By THEODORE GERALD SOARES, Professor of Homiletics and Religious Education in the University of Chicago. Chicago; THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 1910. (*Constructive Bible Studies*. Elementary Series). pp. xxix + 240.

Primarily a guide for the teacher who uses the author's work by the same name in his class-room, this book will be found valuable and full of suggestive thoughts by all teachers who may consult it. The biographical method in teaching Bible history is especially well adapted for younger children, although the author does not make this distinction. The Jewish teacher will have to modify considerably these lessons, because the author's point of view differs greatly from that which obtains in the Jewish religious school. The Jewish teacher must be concerned mainly with teaching the history of Israel. The heroes of Israel must be presented to Jewish children not merely as men of great qualities of soul, nor even solely as great religious leaders, but also as their own ancestors, as the progenitors of the race to which they belong. There is quite a

difference in the character of a lesson on Abraham Lincoln presented in a class-room in England or Germany and the same lesson given to a class of American children. The practical suggestions, however, couched in simple language, that are given in each lesson will be of great benefit to any teacher. The explanatory notes will save the teacher much time and labor that he would have to expend in searching through biblical dictionaries and encyclopedias.

The book contains thirty-five lessons, arranged in three groups, each group ending with a review lesson. A list of proper names and their correct pronunciation is given at the end of the book.

From the Jordan to the Throne of Saul. By CHARLES S. MEDBURY. Cincinnati; THE STANDARD PUBLISHING COMPANY, 1909 (*Training for Service Series*. Number 4 of the *Advanced Training Course*). pp. 192.

The aim of the author is to give an outline of the history of Israel during the period indicated in the title of the book. The outline is provided with all the paraphernalia usually found in sermon Bibles and similar lessons given in religious periodicals. It may serve some purpose in missionary Bible classes, but it is doubtful whether the thoughtful and intelligent teacher, who seeks information rather than suggestions for sermons, will derive much benefit from this booklet. The whole tendency of the work precludes any scientific or even didactic treatment.

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